

Desert Rifles

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2-5 FA Secures, Reopens Al Anbar University

Story by
Sgt. Danny C. Martin Jr.
350th MPAD

AR RAMADI, Iraq- What was once a haven for education was turned into a free-for-all for looters. Anything and everything was available to be taken, destroyed and in some cases both. But in roughly the span of one month, things have been reversed.

Al Anbar University was closed to the public due to the efforts of Coalition Forces in removing the Ba'ath Party and the former regime led by Saddam Hussein. Although the university was left unscathed by the Coalition Forces who came through the area, once these forces were gone, heavy looting and destruction began.

Members of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Field Artillery Regiment, from Fort Sill, Okla., have taken on the task of securing the university and aiding in its rejuvenation to its original state.

"My job here is to provide a safe environment at this university so teachers and students can return and continue classes," said Lt. Col. Bob Bridgford, the commander of 2-5 FA.

The group, which arrived at the university in the first days of this month, has based themselves inside the university. Shortly after their arrival, 2-5 FA had begun its mission by securing the university from looters. They then met with members of the faculty and administration, and

VOTING--- An Iraqi woman casts her vote during the university elections.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Gary L. Qualls Jr.

continued by clearing the buildings of debris.

One of the direct results of the presence of 2-5 FA is that faculty members and families were able to return to the university. As more and more faculty came back to work, they contacted the students and their families to inform them of the security there, encouraging them to return.

The Coalition maintained its goal is to bring Iraq a stable, democratic government. The backbone of a democratic structure is the ability of the people to voice their opinion and vote. The university has begun using these principles with the election of school officials, not just for Al Anbar University, but for nine other institutions as well.

U.S. representatives met with members of the leadership of universities in Iraq, letting them know about the elections.

"This is one of the first democratic processes Iraq has had," said Bridgford.

One of the provisions of the election was that Bridgford wanted no involvement of soldiers in the vote, thus ensuring the vote was made by an Iraqi with no outside influence.

"We just wanted to provide a secure environment to conduct the elections," said Bridgford.

With people now flowing through the university streets and faculty returning to work, another task is being done by some members of the 66th Military Intelligence Battalion.

People were encouraged to step to a table and fill out one of two declarations. One was declaring that the individual has never been and never will be a member of the Ba'ath Party. The other declared that the individual was once a Ba'ath Party member, yet now denounces the party and his or her affiliation with Saddam Hussein and his views.

Whether it is the security of the area, the faculty and



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Gary L. Qualls Jr.

STANDING WATCH--- A soldier with 2-5 FA watches a crowd of students and staff members during the elections.

students, or the simple right to vote, these tasks all fall onto the shoulders of 2-5 FA and those attached. The leadership has complete faith in the soldiers and their professionalism, according to Bridgford.

"So much has been accomplished by this group," Bridgford commented. "There is a lot more to be done, but we have made a good start."

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- Muleskinners make home in a 'graveyard'
- Iraq's employees get paid
- Mosques: More than icons
- Worldwide news and The Question of the Week

Muleskinners Make New Home in MiG Graveyard

Story and photos
By Spc. Joe Niesen
350th MPAD

AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq- The 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment has established several posts throughout their area of responsibility in northern Iraq. They have created places for soldiers to live and work in areas ranging from abandoned train depots to former palaces. However, none are as vast and impressive as the facilities at the abandoned Iraqi air base in Al Asad.

The facility, built in 1984 at a cost of almost \$2 billion, was once regarded as one of the top military facilities in the

readiness and ingenuity of the 3d ACR. They have established a working field surgical team (FST), water purification area and various motor pools in short working order. This comes as little surprise considering the resourcefulness of the 3d ACR's support branches that make up the vast majority of the troops at the facility.

"We are very diverse here. There is a lot more than just trucks," explains Capt. Andrew Mack, the support squadron personnel officer.

He is very proud of the facilities and troops located on the air base. The base currently runs convoys 24 hours a day and manages every level of vehicle and troop maintenance.

The maintenance facilities can handle everything from small arms repair to complete engine overhauls for all of the vehicles used by the 3d ACR.

"We can handle almost anything here in one shot, one kill," said Mack.

Two of the operations underway which have received the most attention by the 3d ACR at the air base are the FST and water treatment efforts.

The FST is the hub for all of the medical units deployed with the 3d ACR. At the base, they can handle the slightest sick-call cases to major surgery. They have a team of specialists ready to treat everything from gunshot wounds to extreme dehydration.

The hospital also is responsible for distributing medicine and equipment discovered on the facility



HOME--- Al Asad Air Base is home for many of the 3d ACR's Muleskinner elements.

to the local population through Army Civil Affairs.

"We do whatever we can to help out here, it's part of the job," said 1st Sgt. Ly Lac, with the 3d ACR FST.

The water treatment facility is a prime example of soldiers adapting to their surroundings and using whatever resources they find.

Located in an Olympic-size outdoor swimming pool, a group of military reverse osmosis water purification units work night and day to filter thousands of gallons of water. These machines are capable of producing enough clean, potable water for all of the soldiers and civilians located on the base.

The 3d ACR has proven its ability to make the most of any situation and ensure the best possible support exists not only for its equipment, but also for its troopers.



GOOD THINKING--- Using available resources creatively, soldiers here have turned a swimming pool into a water treatment area.

country. Located literally between a rock and a hard place, the sandy grounds that blend with the surrounding desert were once lush with greenery.

The facility, in its prime, supported the troops stationed there with everything from barracks and standard work stations to indoor and outdoor pools and a movie theater.

Lining the road leading into Al Asad are the remnants of Iraq's air power. Soviet MiG aircraft lie half buried in the sand, in an attempt to hide their numbers from Coalition Forces. Throughout the expansive base, members of the 3d ACR have discovered weapons caches and equipment abandoned when the Iraqi soldiers left the grounds.

The base is also a testament to the

TRANSFORMED--- Once a storage area for aircraft parts, this deserted administration building is now Muleskinner headquarters.



Iraqi Employees Get Paid in Al Qa'im

**Story and photo
By Spc. Justin Carmack
350th MPAD**

AL QA'IM, Iraq- Coalition Forces have begun the process of helping the Iraqi people as the war moves toward humanitarian operations. On May 19, Tiger Squadron and its supporting elements distributed money to local chief financial officers (CFOs) at several locations in the area.

After receiving the funds from U.S. forces the CFOs distributed money to the government employees of Al Qa'im.

The money distributed to the CFOs was gathered the day before by U.S. soldiers from local banks.

The banks housed Iraqi federal funds which were normally used to pay the government workers. The next day, funds were taken to distribution points within the city.

"We are hoping to boost their economy by putting money in their hands," said Sgt. 1st Class Alan Johnson of Tiger Squadron. "We're giving money to the CFOs so they can distribute it to the people that work for them."

Johnson added it was a priority for citizens to get paid by the CFOs, who are

local representatives, and not by the U.S. forces.

Many changes quickly occurred in Iraq after the war started. Immediately the value of the Iraqi dinar bottomed out. Local economies were unstable, and the future became uncertain.

Citizens did not receive paychecks or rewards for their labor. Many people completely stopped going to work because they were not receiving compensation for their efforts. Government workers, to include teachers, police officers and fire fighters, were among those who stopped working.

"We distributed funds to various government agencies working for the Iraqi government," said Capt. Benjamin Ambrose of Tiger Squadron. "We're giving them the money they normally would have received."

"The people had not received a paycheck in weeks or months so they were happy to see us," said Johnson.

"We'll see how the economy and the people are affected by the distribution of these funds," added Ambrose. "After we run our patrols we should be able to find out the effects."



PAYDAY--- Capt. Benjamin Ambrose, with Tiger Squadron, counts money for distribution to Iraqi government employees during a distribution project in Al Qa'im.

Regimental Reflections- A Convoy Perspective

For the LORD watches over the path of the godly, but the path of the wicked leads to destruction. (Psalm 1:6, NLT)

It has been a hard week for the Regiment. Soldiers have made the ultimate sacrifice as they have been out conducting missions. Some have asked, "What's God's take on all this?" I wouldn't presume to speak for God, so Psalm 1:6 tells us that He watches over the paths of the godly. It is a mistake to think that those who perished were somehow 'not protected'- that's absolute nonsense. Each day given to us is God's absolute gracious gift. The Scriptures give us a peek behind eternity and gives us a view of life and beyond. They give us God's perspective. It's like being in a convoy on the road versus being in a helicopter. From the helicopter you can see for miles. And God has bound Himself, in covenant, to those who have faith in Him to watch over their entire lives however long or short they may be. Should they perish sooner, rather than later, that is not the end of their existence but the beginning of eternity.

But the lifestyle of the wicked will lead to destruction. Sometimes bad people seem to get away with acts of violence, but only if you have a convoy perspective. If their own involvement in acts of terrorism and violence don't self-destruct them God hasn't said "whoops," or dropped the ball. He is the ultimate judge before who all will stand. For those who've trusted in Him it will be a delight to meet him, face to face, as it were. For those who haven't, they will wish the rocks would fall on them to hide them from God (Rev.6:16).

So this week we will weep with those who weep and grieve with them. However take comfort from the eternal view and not a convoy perspective.

**-Chaplain (MAJ) Christopher A. Faria
Regimental Chaplain**

The Mosque: Not Just Another Chapel

Story and photos

By Sgt. 1st Class Keith D. O'Donnell
350th MPAD

AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq-In some circles people still debate if the Coalition actions in Iraq were conquest or liberation. For many, it is not a matter that can be resolved with facts alone, but with feelings and beliefs. The 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment here in western Iraq is attempting to influence those beliefs with a show of respect.

When cultures clashed in days of old, one sign of victory was the destruction of cultural icons. Perhaps no single item represents the Arab Islamic culture more than the Mosque. A visible sign of their faith, the mosque stands in prominence wherever Muslims are found.

Here, this sign of faith has another sign hanging on its gate. "Unauthorized entry into this facility is prohibited. Personnel entering this facility without authorization will be disciplined. By order of the Commander."

From the start of this conflict, the U.S. government has gone to great lengths to state this is not a war on Islam. Here the 3d ACR is driving that point home.

At a movie theater down the road where Christian services are held, Captain Steven Firtko, a chaplain with the 3d ACR explains, "When we arrived about a week ago the Mosque was open and had been looted by local nationals." He said that they immediately secured the facility and placed it off limits to all Coalition soldiers.

Firtko said, "The goal is to preserve and protect the sanctity of the Mosque so it can be returned to local people."

Asked if at any point the Mosque was considered for use as the base chapel, the answer was a resounding "no!" Captain Firtko explained that the preservation of the mosque was a sign of respect to the faith and beliefs of the Muslim people and the Islamic culture. Even American soldiers of Muslim faith are prevented from entering by orders of both the theater commander and the regimental commander.

"A local national won't know if a soldier is a Muslim or not. They will just see the American flag and potentially be offended," said Firtko.

According to DOD officials, if actions speak louder than words, then the U.S. military is going to great lengths to say that this was a war for the people of Iraq and not against them.



HOLY PLACE--- The mosque is regarded very highly by the people of Iraq, thus U.S. forces are staying out, respecting the people and their religion.



Sports Wrap-Up

Here's a look at the latest standings in the world of major sports. Who will reign in the NBA?

Who will walk away with Sir Stanley's Cup?

Can the Cubs hold on to 1st in the NL Central?

Major League Baseball

National League

East

Atlanta
Montreal (-4)
Phil. (-7 ½)
Florida (-11 ½)
New York (-12 ½)

Central

Chicago
St. Louis (-1 ½)
Houston (-2 ½)
Cincinnati (-4 ½)
Pittsburgh (-7)
Milwaukee (-10)

West

San Francisco
Los Angeles (-2 ½)
Colorado (-6)
Arizona (-8 ½)
San Diego (-17 ½)

American League

East

Boston
New York (-½)
Toronto (-3)
Baltimore (-5 ½)
Tampa Bay (-10 ½)

Central

Minnesota
Kansas City (4 ½)
Chicago (-7 ½)
Cleveland (-11 ½)
Detroit (-18)

West

Seattle
Oakland (4)
Anaheim (-8 ½)
Texas (-9)

Stanley Cup Finals

Anaheim Mighty Ducks vs. New Jersey Devils

New Jersey leads series 2-0

Game 1- New Jersey 3, Anaheim 0

Game 2- New Jersey 3, Anaheim 0

NBA Conference Playoffs

Eastern Conference Finals

New Jersey Nets vs. Detroit Pistons

New Jersey won the series 4-0

Game 1- New Jersey 76, Detroit 74

Game 2- New Jersey 88, Detroit 86

Game 3- New Jersey 97, Detroit 85

Game 4- New Jersey 102, Detroit 82

Western Conference Finals

Dallas Mavericks vs. San Antonio Spurs

San Antonio won the series 4-2

Game 1- Dallas 113, San Antonio 110

Game 2- San Antonio 119, Dallas 106

Game 3- San Antonio 96, Dallas 83

Game 4- San Antonio 102, Dallas 95

Game 5- Dallas 103, San Antonio 91

Game 6- San Antonio 90, Dallas 78

NASCAR Winston Cup Standings

1.	Matt Kenseth	1799 pts.	1 Win
2.	Dale Earnhardt Jr.	1639 pts.	1 Win
3.	Jeff Gordon	1583 pts.	1 Win
4.	Kurt Busch	1575 pts.	2 Wins
5.	Jimmie Johnson	1553 pts.	1 Win
6.	Bobby Labonte	1546 pts.	1 Win
7.	Michael Waltrip	1511 pts.	1 Win
8.	Kevin Harvick	1457 pts.	0 Wins
9.	Sterling Marlin	1405 pts.	0 Wins
10.	Rusty Wallace	1401 pts.	0 Wins

The Back Page...

Calling it quits online---

Offering a simpler and cheaper path to divorce, an ever-growing array of dot-coms, computer-savvy lawyers and state court officials are encouraging unhappily married Americans to arrange their breakups online.

For fees ranging from \$50 to \$300 - a small fraction of what most lawyers charge even for an uncontested divorce - couples are being provided with the appropriate forms and varying degrees of help completing them.

The phenomenon is spreading. Rival firms CompleteCase.com and LegalZoom.com each say they have served 20,000 clients nationwide in less than three years of operation.

PA man found naked on airplane---

A man described as a paranoid schizophrenic

sneaked through security at Pittsburgh's airport late at night and was found sleeping aboard a parked commuter airplane the next morning, authorities said.

The airport's security chief said he was "extremely upset" over the weekend incident.

Louis Esquivel remained at the Allegheny County Jail on Wednesday in lieu of \$25,000 bond, county Police Superintendent Ken Fulton said. He was charged with criminal trespass, theft, receiving stolen property and unauthorized use of a motor vehicle.

People forced to use 'pot' outside---

The latest news from Amsterdam, the mecca of marijuana users, is a real mind-blower. Under a new ban on smoking in public places, Dutch coffee shops would be allowed to continue selling joints, but customers would have to go outside to smoke them.

To the chagrin of the owners of the country's popular marijuana smoking establishments, broad national health guidelines due to take effect next January seem to have inadvertently struck at the heart of the liberal Dutch drug policy.

The law to ban smoking in public places is targeted at tobacco users, not marijuana smokers, and has met fierce resistance from eating and drinking establishments.

Death penalty sought in serial killings---

Authorities will seek the death penalty against the suspect in the serial killings of five women, according to a prosecutor.

On Thursday, a brief hearing was held for Derrick Todd Lee over closed-circuit TV with Lee remaining in prison; it

was not open to the public. Judicial Commissioner Rachel Pitcher Morgan advised Lee that state law does not allow bond in a death penalty case, the judge's office said.

Neb. Senator declares war on Iowa---

A Nebraska lawmaker is so fed up with constituents crossing the state border to gamble that she proposed going to war with neighboring Iowa.

"I've been cautioned that the members of the Iowa Legislature might not take it kindly," said Sen. Pam Brown of Omaha.

Brown's proposed amendment read: "The sovereign state of Nebraska declares a state of hostility with the sovereign state of Iowa until such a time as the state of Iowa ceases the unjust and relentless appropriation of the resources of the citizens of Nebraska."

A new PS/2 is coming---

Sony Corp. unveiled a "crossover" PlayStation 2 video game console with a built-in DVD recorder and hard drive for storing data Wednesday. This new concept is part of a strategy to combine technologies in hopes of boosting the company's brand and restoring its profitability.

The beefed-up PlayStation 2, called the PSX, will go on sale in Japan this year and is planned for release in the United States and Europe early next year, Sony executive deputy president Ken Kutaragi said. He refused to give a price.

Rock, Paper, Scissors---

Rock smashes scissors. Paper covers rock. Scissors cut paper. Student insists there's a deeper meaning.

Thomas Shaffer, who organized a rock-paper-scissors tournament at his high school in Elizabethtown, Penn., says the game is based on patterns, so the odds of winning increase when a player better observes his opponent.

"At first I was one of the believers that it is a game of luck," Shaffer said. "I'll let you in on a little secret: Most people open with scissors. Novice players rarely throw the same thing twice in a row."

Venus triumphant at French Open---

Venus Williams struggled with erratic groundstrokes and a persistent opponent before winning the final three games Thursday to beat Evie Dominikovic 6-3, 4-6, 6-2 in the second round at the French Open.

Williams, seeded third, committed 68 unforced errors, lost her serve five times and needed nearly two hours to advance.

Dominikovic, ranked 110th, was bidding for an upset on her 23rd birthday.

Question of the Week:

What Cold War-era science fiction film featured the 3d ACR?

Submit answers to: RCSM Caldwell in writing with name, rank and section.



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3rd ACR PAO
Operation Iraqi Freedom
APO AE 09320-1507

Regimental Commander
Col. David A. Teeple

Regimental Public Affairs Officer
Capt. Bren Workman

Staff Publishing Editors
Capt. Michael Calvert
Sgt. 1st Class Keith O'Donnell

Editor/Layout
Sgt. Danny C. Martin Jr.

Staff Reporters
Sp. Joe Niesen
Sp. Justin Carmack